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DOE FOR M.SCOTT, T.SPERL, G.PERSON, A.BIENAWSKI, L.PARKER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [KNNP](#) [ETRD](#) [SENV](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: SAG EAGER TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

REF: PRETORIA 2245

11. (SBU) SUMMARY and Action Request: The SAG is eager to develop a Strategic Dialogue led by the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister. The idea would be to use existing and prospective working groups and the existing Annual Bilateral Forum, which would produce a summary document to inform the annual meeting of the Ministers. The Ministers would in turn provide direction for the Strategic Dialogue and the bilateral relationship. The next Annual Bilateral Forum (ABF) is targeted for March 2010. Post recommends consideration of an Oval Office visit when President Zuma attends the Nuclear Security Summit April 12-13 in Washington DC. Post seeks Department's view on whether there should be a Memorandum of Understanding for the new Strategic Dialogue (see paragraph 6). The SAG DIRCO USA Desk made a few comments about Iran sanctions and Zimbabwe. End Summary and Action Request.

New Strategic Dialogue Builds on Existing Structures

12. (SBU) Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) USA Director Fadl Nacerodien told DCM on December 10 that his Minister was eager to move forward on the Strategic Dialogue agreed to by the Ministers when they met in August 2009 in Pretoria. Nacerodien said his Minister would like the Ministers' engagement to be on an annual basis. The DCM and Nacerodien agreed that the term "Strategic Dialogue" would be appropriate. They emphasized that the dialogue should be flexible and informal, in contrast to the historic binational Gore-Mbeki Commission, which was top-heavy and unsustainable. Nacerodien cautioned against scheduling the high-level meeting on the margins of the UNGA.

Build on the Annual Bilateral Forum

13. (SBU) Nacerodien liked the idea of using the existing Annual Bilateral Forum structure as an opportunity for senior officials to take note of all the bilateral activities and issues, many under existing and prospective working groups. He said the next ABF should be targeted for March 2010, but said DIRCO could not fix a specific date until the Minister approved the structure for the Strategic Dialogue. The advantage of the ABF is that it has been used successfully in the past. Because this meeting involves wide interagency participation both on the South African and U.S. sides, it is envisaged that it will always take place in South Africa.

Nacerodien and the DCM agreed that Ambassador Gips and the DIRCO Deputy Director General of the Americas and Europe would chair the ABF. The DCM said A/S Carson may try to be a special guest at the first new ABF under the Strategic Dialogue. Nacerodien recommended that the DIRCO USA Desk be the main interlocutor for preparing and running the ABF, as has been done in the past.

¶4. (SBU) Nacerodien noted that the last informal ABF in April 2009 (led by the Charge and the USA Director and without representation of other Departments-agencies for the SAG) was productive, but constituted "a long, grueling day". He recommended that the next full-fledged, inter-Departmental ABF should be scheduled for a day and a half. It would be QABF should be scheduled for a day and a half. It would be DIRCO's turn to host at their spanking new headquarters. Nacerodien recommended that the USG and the SAG work out some sort of media statement for the ABF, characterizing the Strategic Dialogue and the ABF. There would need to be coordination of brief fact sheets for each issue and each working group, which would be appendices to the jointly prepared summary document for the Ministers.

Forming New Bilateral Working Groups

¶5. (SBU) The DCM and Nacerodien discussed working groups, noting that existing formal groups were the DEFCOM (a vestige of the Gore-Mbeki Commission) and Health (PEPFAR structure). The ABF provides an opportunity to include Defense, but then there would be a layer of separation with the Ministers'

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meeting to avoid any perception that the Secretary of State had specific oversight for Defense. The DCM argued for an inclusive approach for other informal working groups where there was already bilateral dialogue as for nuclear and law enforcement. An agriculture working group will be constituted imminently with the signing of a long-awaited MOU between the two Agriculture Ministries. A US-SA business council - not run by governments but encouraged by them to promote trade, investment, and a healthy business environment - is prospective with the MOU signed this year between CCA and Business Union SA (BUSA) at the last CCA in Washington. Other potential working groups identified include: energy-climate change, education, human rights, trilateral assistance, maritime, and economic-trade-ICT. Both sides agreed that we should prioritize and not set up too many new working groups. Post shared a draft list of working groups for discussion.

Is a Memorandum of Understanding Needed
to Establish the Process?

¶6. (SBU) Nacerodien asked whether a MOU would be necessary for structuring the Strategic Dialogue. Both sides agreed to research this with their respective legal offices. While there would be a potential advantage in clarifying structure, a requirement of an MOU could delay startup. Comment: Embassy feels that if the Department decides that a legal document is preferable, it would be important to structure this in a way that would permit us to hold the ABF in March, since that meeting was scheduled to take place this Fall, but had to be postponed because the South Africans needed more time to get ready for it. END COMMENT.

Other Issues Discussed

¶7. (SBU) Presidential Visit: Nacerodien noted that President Zuma would likely attend President Obama's Nuclear Security Summit April 12-13, 2010. He asked for a copy of the White

House invitation (request sent separately by Post to ISN by e-mail). The DCM and Nacerodien agreed that this could be a good opportunity for an Oval Office visit. Nacerodien expressed a preference that the two Presidents meet after the Nuclear Summit if possible.

18. (SBU) Iran and Zimbabwe: Nacerodien asked about new Iran measures he understood to be under discussion in Congress (request sent separately by Post to Department by e-mail). He said the SAG and the USG shared the goal of not letting Iran obtain illegal nuclear weapons, but the SAG supported Iran being able to pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy allowed under the NPT. He agreed that the SAG should take a harder stand on Iran. Nacerodien also commended what he termed the USG's new constructive and supportive approach on Zimbabwe. He claimed that before the USG criticized the SAG more than Zimbabwe.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: There is a strong desire on the part of the SAG to move forward on the Strategic Dialogue to advance our bilateral relationship in a number of areas of mutual interest. In Foreign Minister Mashabane's meeting with the Ambassador on November 2 (reftel), she expressed a strong desire to move forward on structuring the Strategic Dialogue and the DIRCO USA Desk has been tasked to help achieve this Qand the DIRCO USA Desk has been tasked to help achieve this objective. END COMMENT.

GIPS